

December 23, 1988

Dear Mom,

I've had a letter in my head for you for weeks but always seem to get to the end of the day before I can find time to settle down at the typewriter. I want you to know that I really enjoyed the time that we spent together in Washington. It was great being able to show you the Quilt. The most special moment in the entire weekend for me was when you told the interviewer, "Yes, I'm very proud of my son." That was the first time I had ever heard you say those words specifically for me and in relation to my work in the gay community. Every time I have related that moment to anyone I have choked up, my eyes filling with tears. On some occasions the person I was telling also cried. You are a special lady, and your approval means a great deal to me.

Thanks very much for the nice box of cookies. They arrived in fairly good shape. I have served them to guests and everyone has enjoyed them. One friend said, "Oh, these must be 'mother' cookies. You can always tell when mother makes them."

Also want to thank you for the Christmas check. Yours and Gail's checks totaled \$80 and I applied them both to the cost of the suit. You may be pleased to know that I got the suit on sale at a savings of \$81. So with the sale and your gifts, it was affordable. The sale price was \$243.99. It is solid gray flannel and feels great to the touch. I went over to Fashion Valley to pick it up a couple days ago but was dissatisfied with the alterations and asked them to make some corrections. Now, it won't be ready until December 28th. Good thing I didn't especially want it for Christmas day.

On the 10th of December I attended a memorial service for my friend and colleague, Dr. Brad Truax. Brad had been diagnosed with AIDS in July of 1987 and finally succumbed to Kaposi's sarcoma last month. Brad had long been a political activist for lesbian/gay concerns and was very influential. He was responsible for getting the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to create the Regional Task Force on AIDS and served as the chair of that task force until he was no longer able to work. The more-than-500 people who gathered for the memorial service were impressive by what they represented.

There were members of the San Diego City Council, the County Board of Supervisors, and the California State Assembly. Both the County Board of Supervisors and the State Assembly sent letters of condolence and announced that they had adjourned their sessions in Brad's honor upon learning of his passing. Art Agnos, the Mayor of San Francisco, delivered a fine eulogy. Brad's two brothers also spoke, and the San Diego Gay Men's Chorus sang two very moving pieces. The Chorus is now over 60 voices strong and sounds magnificent. Looking around at the audience, I was truly proud of my people. They were dressed to the nines and looked terrific.

Fifteen years ago, shortly after I came to San Diego, it would not have been possible to have such a respectful and dignified service for a gay activist. Brad's life and work had been major factors in making the necessary changes that have occurred and finally resulting in the kind of official recognition that he received at the memorial service. I came away from the event feeling uplifted. Morris Knight was with me, as I had picked him up from the airport that morning. He came representing the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, of which

he is the President. The wake was held at Brad's Mission Hills home where the back yard is terraced on three or four levels around swimming pool and hot tub. The event was catered and food of all sorts was available on every level. It was like a gay family reunion. I was especially pleased that dozens of the mourners took the time to come by my table, hug me, touch me, kiss me, and tell me of their concern and prayers for my well being. I felt less tired and weak by the end of the event than at the beginning.

As far as my health, I must admit that I am very physically challenged these days. I continue to be in a chronic state of bilateral upper lobe pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP). That produces a vicious cough, constant sputum production, and at least once a day (usually in the morning) progresses to gagging and vomiting. I am very short of breath and profoundly fatigued, making it difficult to do simple tasks like showering or shaving or meal preparation. Loss of appetite has made it very difficult for me to get enough calories down and I have lost 8 pounds since October.

On the brighter side, I talked to a Dr. Mang who is conducting research on several AIDS treatment protocols. During our conversation he just happened to mention that a lot of patients with PCP who were being treated solely with pentamidine by aerosol inhalation (rather than by intravenous route) had not progressed well. Studies have shown the lower lobes clear but the upper lobes remain infected. It is theorized that this phenomenon is a result of gravity carrying the inhaled drug downward to the lower lobes and preventing a sufficient amount of the drug to get to the upper lobes. He then stated that this condition causes a very atypical pattern on the chest X-ray, which is often mistaken for tuberculosis.

When he said that, I said, "Bingo! You just described my situation to a 'T'". Dr. Mang and I then discussed various alternatives including standing on my head during respiratory treatments so that gravity would work for me instead of against me. He also asked why I had not been on a drug called Septra-DS which is the first drug of choice for the treatment of PCP. When I told him that I was allergic to it, he said that a lot of patients in my situation who were allergic to Septra-DS have started taking it anyhow and monitor themselves for allergic symptoms. He said that in many, if the symptoms are not severe and the patient felt that he can tolerate the discomfort, they have continued with the drug and after about 5 days the allergic symptoms had disappeared.

Well, hooray! Nice to hear some encouragement. So I talked to my physician (Dr. Nourse) and gave him all of the above information. He wrote me a prescription for Septra-DS and I've been on it now for 7 days. So far, no allergic symptoms. It is a three-week course of therapy, so I have two more weeks to see what happens. And so far, I've experienced no improvement in my symptoms. On the contrary, the last three days I've been more short of breath than ever. However, I am still optimistic.

The brightest light on the horizon comes from a new treatment that utilizes the typhoid vaccine to stimulate the immune system. Early trials have been very encouraging with a high percentage of patients showing great improvement within a couple months, both clinically and by laboratory measurement. Within the last month a San Diego doctor by the name of Olmstead has started using the protocol. It's expensive (\$60 a week) and I'm not sure that it will be covered by my insurance since it is still considered an experimental treatment. If it works, it will be well worth the money, no matter who's paying the bills. I have a call in to Dr. Olmstead's office and he is supposed

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to call me back on Wednesday, December 28th when he returns from an out-of-town trip. So I am keeping my fingers crossed that I will be a candidate for the typhoid program and can get started right away. I'm enclosing a newspaper article about the treatment.

Well, aside from wishing you all the best for a warm, loving, and happy holiday, I don't have much more news. Blanche and Beverly each sent me nice cards. So I'll be getting notes off to them. I had some custom photo Christmas cards made this year. Just picked them up today. There were delays in the whole process that I couldn't control. So, what the hell, they'll be just as good when they arrive late.

Love in the struggle,

Bob